

Winter 2009

Steans Center Newsletter

Steans Center

Follow this and additional works at: <https://via.library.depaul.edu/steans-news>



Part of the [Education Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Steans Center. (2009) Steans Center Newsletter.
<https://via.library.depaul.edu/steans-news/2>

This Journal Issue is brought to you for free and open access by the Steans Center at Via Sapientiae. It has been accepted for inclusion in Steans Center Newsletters, Press Releases and News Items by an authorized administrator of Via Sapientiae. For more information, please contact digitalservices@depaul.edu.

Community Health Assets Key to Innovative Community-based Health Research Project

BY DAN BARON

“For the most part, immigrants have been coming to this country very healthy,” said P. Rafael Hernández-Arias, an assistant professor of sociology at DePaul University. “They work and earn more here, and their health status goes up for a few years. But then, something happens, their health status begins to decline. We wanted to learn why. To find out, we went to the communities.”

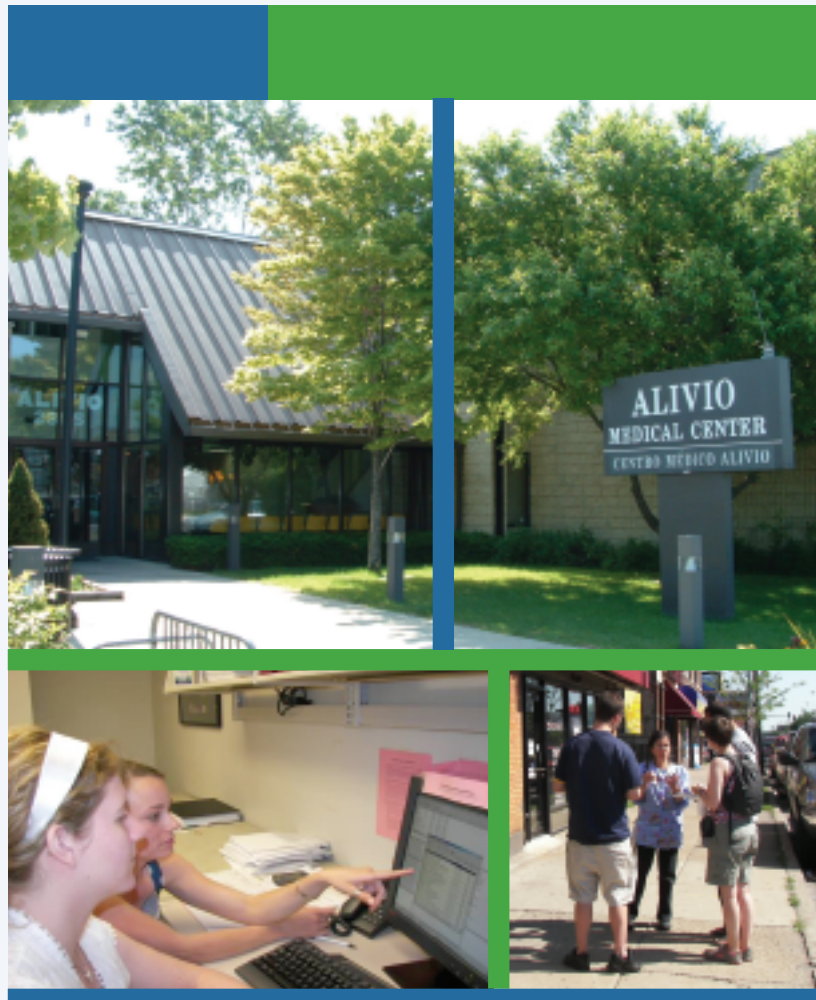
For the last two years, Hernández-Arias has been a co-principal investigator of the Community Health Assets and Needs Assessment (CHANA), a community-based participatory research project designed to assess health resources and needs among the residents of four communities on Chicago’s South Side—Armour Square, Archer Heights, Bridgeport and Gage Park. Armour Square is a predominantly Chinese-American community; Archer Heights and Gage Park all have significant Latino immigrant populations, and Bridgeport is a heterogeneous neighborhood. The project focuses on health issues facing low-income immigrant communities of color. What Hernández-Arias and his colleagues have documented are diverse neighborhoods, a variety of health-related concerns and communities that have a wide range of resources and assets.

The CHANA project emphasizes the wide—and often-neglected—range of community assets in low-income neighborhoods, from a health clinic used by residents and a fresh produce market to a program for youth at a local park district facility. In almost all cases, however, when the outside world tries to understand the health status of immigrants living in such neighborhoods, assets are rarely considered. Identifying assets is important to begin addressing health needs with the resources that are immediately available.

Hernández-Arias’ main research interest is on immigration and health; he was struck by the lack of available information on this subject. “Some government sources claim that 20 percent of the workforce is composed of immigrants – and yet there is no data that documents the health conditions of immigrants,” he states, “How is that possible?”

The lack of community-based data specifically about immigrants makes the CHANA project useful to community-based organizations that are eager to use the information. Esther Wong, Executive Director of the Chinese American Service League, a partner in CHANA, added that “as a Chinese social service agency, we are always interested in research, because there’s not that much research on our communities. The survey conducted by this project was more environmental, social and community-oriented in nature than what we usually see.”

continued on page 4



CHANA students analyze interview data (left); students verifying health assets inventory (right)



Howard Rosing, Ph.D.
Executive Director

STAFF

Rebecca Martinez
Academic and Community
Development Program
Coordinator

Missy Frazin
Jumpstart Site Manager

Johnny LaSalle
Receptionist

Heather Little
Jumpstart Site Manager

Jean Vipond
Course Development
Program Coordinator

Norlin Monzon
Technology Coordinator

Jacqueline Lazú, Ph.D.
Incoming Director of
Community Service Studies

Jeffrey Howard
Assistant Director for Academic
and Faculty Development

Marisol Morales
Associate Director

Alexandra (Lexa) Murphy, Ph.D.
Director, Community
Service Studies

Micaela Maynard
AmeriCorps VISTA

Liezl Alcantara
Program Evaluation Coordinator

Melanie Sillas
Catholic Schools
Initiative Coordinator

Barbara Smith
Business Manager

Ashley Stone
Service Scholars Program
Coordinator

Raechel Tiffe
Internships and Scholarships
Coordinator

Chad Williams
Assistant Director for
Course Placement

Summer Nakaishi
Administrative Assistant

DIRECTOR'S LETTER

Research at the community level in Chicago has a long and complicated history. During the 20th century, low-income neighborhoods in the city played a fundamental role in the development of urban research within the academy. Often described as "laboratories," these neighborhoods provided subjects for research experimentation, objects of study that contributed greatly to the prestige of universities and their scholars. Some of the most important social science theories were hypothesized, tested and retested on the streets of Chicago. The countless Chicago residents who answered surveys, responded to interview questions, participated in focus groups, and became the objects of observation contributed a tremendous amount to the academy, but unfortunately often saw very little in return.

I would like to believe that the hope among researchers—and the institutions and funders that supported them—was that their studies might inform public policy in areas such as healthcare, housing and education access, crime prevention, youth development and employment. Yet, after more than 100 years of neighborhood-based research in Chicago, numerous communities continue to struggle with all these social issues. Not surprisingly, many community leaders have expressed to us that they are simply tired of being studied.

This edition of the Steans Center newsletter highlights ways that DePaul faculty and students are engaged in a self-reflexive rethinking of the community studies model inherited from our academic ancestors. DePaul is of course not alone in this movement. Community-based participatory research (CbPR) and participatory action research (PAR) models have finally been given some legitimacy in higher education, especially since government and foundations that fund research increasingly require collaboration with, and participation of, community partners. What makes the example of the CbPR project highlighted in this edition unique, however, is that the university is neither the driving force nor the primary conductor of the research. Rather, the latter is the role of the community partner itself. Dr. Hernandez-Arias and his students are involved as collaborators to learn from the community and to offer whatever forms of research resources and assistance that make the project successful.

What also makes the CHANA project uniquely DePaul is that it exemplifies a way to educate students to develop research skills that do not exploit communities for the sake of making academic or professional careers. The issues of immigration and health are currently very critical topics, either of which could be the basis for establishing oneself as an academic expert. The CHANA model, however, is an example of education and scholarship through community engagement. This is not simply an effort to build experts on already over-studied communities, but to offer opportunities to learn and contribute to how communities are fighting back using indigenous knowledge to build themselves.

cbsl.depaul.edu

STEANS CENTER

2233 N. KENMORE AVE.
CHICAGO, IL 60614-3547
(773) 325-7457
(773) 325-7459 FAX

SUITE 9300
1 EAST JACKSON BLVD.
(312) 362-8673

STEANS CENTER RECEIVES CARTER PARTNERSHIP AWARD



In November, the Steans Center and the Puerto Rican Cultural Center (PRCC) received the first prize for the Jimmy and Rosalynn Carter Partnership Foundation Award from Illinois Campus Compact. The \$15,000 award, split between both organizations, reflects a seven year partnership between DePaul and the PRCC. The partnership includes multiple service learning projects as well as the integration of a DePaul Community Service Studies Minor course taught onsite at the PRCC. DePaul faculty and staff have also co-presented with PRCC staff at academic and community conferences. DePaul and the PRCC were selected for the award by a committee comprised of higher education, business, government, and community leaders.

Opportunities

Faculty Community-based Research Fellowships

The Steans Center for Community-based Service Learning and the Women and Gender Research Initiative offer two faculty community-based research fellowships for the 2009-10 academic year. For information, visit cbsl.depaul.edu/faculty/fellows

Cesar Chavez Service and Values Series Events

- **Celebrating Latina Creativity in Chicago**
April, 2nd, 6 PM, LPC, Cortelyou Commons
- **Gracias Rafael**
Premier Acto Play
April 30-May 3, LPC SAC 314 A&B

McCormick Community Internships- Fall 2009

Students develop a project in collaboration with a community organization for up to two-quarters utilizing their individual talents and academic expertise. Interns receive up to \$1,200 per academic quarter.
Fall 2009 application deadline: May 18, 2009.
For info, visit: cbsl.depaul.edu

Community Service Scholars: Educating Socially Engaged Leaders

BY ASHLEY STONE

Marisol Becerra recalls one of her favorite moments doing community service. “I remember going door-to-door, organizing with a youth group to get our community more conscious about environmental justice. Some people were not receptive to us. However, one lady we spoke with knew more about environmental issues than we did! She told us how happy she was to see youth taking the initiative. Because of our effort, she decided to be part of the change. Now, she joins our meetings and is organizing alongside our group.”

Becerra, who worked with DePaul service learning students when she was a high school student volunteering at the Little Village Environmental Justice Organization on Chicago’s South West side, is a sophomore in DePaul’s Community Service Scholarship Program. Each year, dozens of DePaul freshmen apply for the four-year program. Applications are reviewed by the Community Service Scholarship Advisory Board and those like Becerra, with the unique community service backgrounds, are selected for in-person interviews. Of those interviewed, approximately 30 incoming students are selected each year for the scholarship. Currently, there are 100 students in the program, each of which receives a monetary reward. Incoming students in 2008 received \$8500 per year for which they complete a set of requirements and maintain a high grade point average.

As one of the scholarship requirements students complete 90 hours of community service per academic year. The goal is for scholars to connect with one community organization that fits their interests and then build a relationship with them during their tenure at DePaul. Becerra decided on Little Village Environmental Justice Organization where she continues her work as an activist within her own community. “The fact that we have to build a relationship with one

organization is great. This way, we can make real change, not leaving things half way done.” As a result of her ongoing commitment, in 2008, Becerra was featured in *Newsweek* and was recognized nationally for her work in the field of environmental justice.

In addition to minimum service requirement, Community Service Scholars are required to complete DePaul’s Community Service Studies (CSS) minor. The minor is comprised of three core courses — Perspectives on Community Service, Introduction to Nonprofit Management, and Community Internship — and three electives selected from a variety of disciplines. 125 students are currently enrolled in the minor, which includes courses from 14 colleges and departments. The Steans Center not only provides guidance and support for students completing their scholarship requirements but it links scholars to academic advising through the Faculty Director of the CSS minor.

Dr. Lexa Murphy, Faculty Director for CSS, has been with the program for six years where she has learned firsthand the value of linking service with the classroom experience. “I think the minor’s combination of theory and practice is appealing to a wide range of students who want to learn about philosophical, moral, and ethical approaches for community service as well as students who want hands-on experience and practical application.” According to Murphy, the minor enhances the experience of community service for students in the scholarship program. “The Community Service Scholars are a unique group of students committed to a minimum of 30 hours of service per quarter. The minor offers a structured way for them to reflect, connect, and integrate service work into their academic programs of study. Hopefully, it helps them understand the meaning of their service in a larger context.”



Marisol Becerra, Community Service Scholar

Murphy is determined for the minor to continue to grow and help students develop their relationships with the outside world. “My hope is that the CSS minor will be the ‘minor of choice’ across DePaul University and that more students will discover the benefits of ‘learning and doing’ service in their local and global communities. Change happens when we all work together and recognize our roles and responsibilities in this interconnected world. These are relevant concepts that can enhance any major program of study.”

Andy Witt, a junior Community Service Scholar majoring in Biology, is working with the Howard Brown Health Center, the Midwest’s largest LGBT comprehensive healthcare provider. Witt speaks candidly about the impact the minor has had on his life and career goals. “The minor has made me question whether I want to go into the private sector of healthcare or continue working with marginalized groups and work in the public sector. I always saw myself working in the private sector of healthcare, but now I realize that my passion is not where the money is, but it is where the greater need is.” For students like Witt and Becerra, the scholarship program not only offers the opportunity to explore meaningful career opportunities, but it positions them as future socially engaged leaders in their chosen fields.

Community Health Assets Key to Innovative Community-based Health Research Project

Community-based Research Model

The CHANA project is distinguished by how it involves the community; the project's community-based participatory research approach was to ask immigrants how they take care of health concerns. Data collection for four segments of the project was completed by community residents. Throughout the project, DePaul students analyzed data collected by more than 200 community residents; the projects involved collecting data through 32 individual interviews, 24 focus groups, 1,190 residential surveys, and 685 block inventories. The research also features a protocol that kept the cost low, a method that will benefit organizations that may want to replicate the project. "If you are an immigrant, you are paying a toll in so many areas," Hernández-Arias said, "The beauty of community-based participatory research is that it gives people an outlet through which they can articulate what they know."

The research shows how health-related issues can look very different between two neighborhoods, even if they are located adjacent to one another, or even within a neighborhood. For instance, in analyzing the block inventories, students realized that the north part of Armour Square contains a variety of stores with fresh produce, while in a low-income neighborhood in the south part of the neighborhood it was very difficult to find any fresh produce at all. The project also found that Armour Square has sixteen social service organizations, while Archer Heights has only two.

There are many ways that community organizations can use the data collected in the four components of the CHANA project. For example, the research revealed that thousands of eligible families reported not knowing about the State of Illinois' All Kids program—a program that guarantees insurance for all children in the state. That kind of information can be shared with community residents to inform them about available means of having access to medical service resources, at least for children and adolescents.

Partners

The CHANA Project brought together a range of key research partners who formed the project's Community Advisory Council, which includes representatives from Alivio Medical Center, the Chicago Department of Public Health and four community-based organizations—the Chinese American Service League, Latino Organization of the Southeast, the Inner-City Muslim Action



CHANA Community Advisory Council Meeting

Network, and San Miguel Schools, and DePaul University. The primary financial sponsor of the project is Alivio Medical Center, a bilingual, bicultural nonprofit health center that serves more than 20,000 people a year and draws patients from all four surveyed communities.

Carmen Velasquez, Founder and Executive Director of Alivio Medical Center, was a co-principal investigator for the project with Hernández-Arias. "We wanted to document what people are feeling about health care and what problems they have in accessing the system," said Velasquez. "The uniqueness here is in the tools developed by the project. They are going to be available to any community entity."

Velasquez praises Hernández-Arias for "recognizing the opportunity to work with our health center, and allowing for his students to be actively engaged in the process." She said the CHANA project has "a bottoms-up approach. It has soul and reflects the real feelings of the people."

Data provided by participants in the project create a broader vision of public health in their neighborhoods. "This research provides the kind of information that is invaluable to the health department," says Joseph Harrington, Assistant Commissioner of the Chicago Department of Public Health, which endorsed the project. "We have significant information about birth and death. The question is: What happens in between? This project can provide research-based, analytical data about the health of communities and individuals. That can help us make plans and projections." Harrington added that the CHANA project can greatly benefit communities. "Communities have the power to frame public policy," he claimed, "To the extent that community members have information about real concerns from this project, they can articulate those concerns to elected officials."



DePaul Student Involvement Essential

Over the years, Hernández-Arias designed four distinct courses related to the project of which he taught a total of nine sections. The classes

are research design and research methods as well as on quantitative and qualitative health data analysis. Thus far, 118 DePaul students have participated in the project as researchers providing a service to communities.

Britt Skaathun, who earned her degree in Sociology at DePaul, was a student research assistant on health-related issues in the community. Her work on a community assessment helped set the stage for the CHANA project. "This work gives you a different perspective as a student," she noted. "When you realize that what you are doing can be used by community members, it's more inspiring. Engagement with the community motivates you to do a good job. You want to make sure the data is as specific as possible." The work with Professor Hernández-Arias, she adds, "helped me focus my interest for school." Skaathun is currently pursuing a Masters degree in epidemiology at the University of Illinois at Chicago's School of Public Health.

"We have significant information about birth and death. The question is: What happens in between? This project can provide research-based, analytical data about the health of communities and individuals."

Meanwhile, Mike Bielaczyc, a senior sociology major with a health and health services concentration, took a course on quantitative data analysis taught by Hernández-Arias. After completing the class, he served as a volunteer for the project. Bielaczyc, who grew up in an immigrant community, said "our culture owes so much to these communities, but pays so little attention to them. Through this project, we have the opportunity to go deeper into what we've learned about these communities—and see why certain groups describe their health status in such different ways."

Service Learning in Rome



Tucked away in a quiet Roman neighborhood, DePaul students are engaging with elderly Italians about their lives, the history of Italy and cultural similarities and differences between the U.S. and Italy. The students are participants in DePaul's Rome study abroad program which for the past two years has incorporated a service learning component. Each week students visit the Il Girasole Senior Center, a program of the Italian organization Cooperativa San Saturnino Olus, where they participate in one-on-one conversations and group activities while applying Italian language skills.

The Steans Center initiated the Rome Service Learning Program during Fall 2007 as a pilot project in partnership with DePaul's Study Abroad Office, Dr. Brian Sykes in the Art and Art History Department, and Casa Famiglia, an Italian foster care program. In 2008, Marisol Morales, Associate Director of the Steans Center worked Carolina Ciampaglia of the language school Italiadia to permanently incorporate the service learning component into an advanced Italian course (*Italia Oggi*). In addition, students enrolled in a conversation Italian course have the option to work on a service learning project with Casa Famiglia. This year the students worked on a video project in collaboration with the youth who reside in the home. Meanwhile, at Il Girasole, students worked on a variety of assignments with the elderly participants including an oral history project and planning cultural events and holiday parties.

The Rome Service Learning Program sheds light on the importance of service learning as a pedagogy for not only improving students language acquisition skills,

but as an experience that teaches them about the cultural contexts within which language is always embedded. This was certainly the outcome for Senior Italian major Teresa Santin who gained valuable community experience in Rome. The experience contributed to her selection for a summer volunteer internship program sponsored by the Italian Consulate in Albania in which interns do service work and teach English at a summer camp.



To view photos of DePaul students working with the elderly at Il Girasole in Rome, visit www.coopsansaturnino.org/ultime-notizie/hallo-friends.html.



MISSION STATEMENT: The Steans Center for Community-based Service Learning provides educational opportunities grounded in Vincentian community values to DePaul students. The Center seeks to develop mutually beneficial, reciprocal relationships with community organizations in order to develop a sense of social agency in our students through enrollment in CbSL courses, community internships and placements, and community-based student employment.

continued from page 4

Community Health Assets Key to Innovative Community-based Health Research Project

We know that health is affected by many physical factors, but we saw with the CHANA project that what is around you can have an equally or more important effect.” He noted, for example, how there are major differences between the number of health clinics and doctors’ offices in one community compared to another.



CHANA community researcher training session

DePaul student Jay Borchert feels there is something significant at stake with this project. “We are learning through our research that this kind of information can affect people’s lives,” informed Borchert, who is pursuing a sociology degree at DePaul, “For me, this experience provides the opportunity to apply social thinking to a real problem that is occurring now. It has definitely affected my future goals, and helped me to focus. Now I have some real experience interacting with communities.”

DePaul student Theresa Lasenby, who is pursuing a master’s degree in social work, had a chance to observe and collect data on the South Armour Square neighborhood — and witness firsthand the dearth of medical offices and fresh healthy food options in the community. “I hope that elected officials and others in the community can see the overall picture of what’s happening here – even down to the details of how meat looks in a case and what snacks are available to people,” she said. “You can’t get any more raw or real than the data collected for this project.”

Action Research as Service Learning

In the coming months, Hernández-Arias says the CHANA project will communicate key information about its findings through the *Voices from the Community Report*, which will be released at town hall meetings in each of four communities included in the project. The research will not end with the meetings, however. Plans are underway to replicate the CHANA project in partnership with community organizations in north side neighborhoods by 2010. In addition, Hernández-Arias will also be authoring and co-authoring a range of articles on CHANA; both he and his students have and will continue to present some of the research findings at conferences. For Hernández-Arias and many DePaul students, the research experience introduced by CHANA has given them a chance to partner with and better understand underserved groups. “The ability to engage with communities keeps my work a little more real,” said Hernández-Arias. “It’s a way of engaging the university in building a better city. I tell students, the work you do in my classes does not stay in the drawers of my desk. It goes back to the community.”

2nd Annual Service Speaks Conference



The Service Speaks Conference highlights the work of DePaul students, faculty and community partners who are greatly impacted by their service-learning and social justice experiences. Participate in a day-long conference featuring

panels, presentations, workshops and posters that reflect the impact of service-learning on critical social issues in Chicago and internationally. Kathy Kelly, Nobel Peace Prize nominee, human rights activist and coordinator for Voices for Creative Nonviolence, joins us as the keynote speaker. To submit a presentation proposal, visit the Steans Center website: cbssl.depaul.edu/servicespeaks/callforProposals.asp. Deadline for proposals extended to April 1st



THE IRWIN W. **STEANS CENTER**

2233 NORTH KENMORE AVENUE

CHICAGO, IL 60614-3547